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municipal recreation bulletin

Ministry of Community and Social Services

Youth and Recreation Branch

Facilities for recreation

People seek a wide variety of recreation activities, needing an equally wide range of facilities—from simple, flat open spaces to highly specialized buildings. Since recreation programs reflect the needs of people, the facilities should meet the needs of program.

A recreation facility is an adequate and appropriate area or building, or a combination of both. Indoor facilities include meeting rooms, classrooms, halls, exhibition areas and craft rooms. Outdoor facilities include playgrounds, parks, picnic areas, playfields, beach areas and tennis courts. Specialized buildings include arenas, swimming pools, libraries, community centres, marinas and museums. Combinations are needed for a sports stadium, a golf course or a zoological garden.

Planning recreation facilities

Recreation facilities are expensive to build and even more expensive to operate and maintain. The solution to this question of cost is careful planning. Basic principles involved in planning recreation facilities can be concisely stated. Some are:

1
All recreation facilities serve people. Do not think of them as space and physical structures, but in terms of their use by children and adults.

2
Change your planning as circumstances warrant (i.e., with increasing affluence and mobility, new construction materials, higher educational levels). But it must be well-balanced, taking into account: neighborhood, community and regional; active and passive areas; landscaped areas and play areas for team sports; formal gardens and nature trails. It has to serve the entire municipality, including those areas beyond but related to, the municipality.

3
Planning should be based on a thorough study and evaluation of existing facilities, community interest, the people who live there, future population growth and the community's financial capabilities.

4
Desirable standards should be set early in the study. Change them only on the basis of more study of such factors as age, income, occupations, level of education, ethnic groupings and mobility of population. The activities of a select few today could be the activities of the masses tomorrow. For information about standards, get a copy of the manual *Standards and Definitions of Terms* from Youth and Recreation Branch.

5
Open space is now considered an aesthetic and therapeutic necessity. It should be acquired as far in advance of its development as possible. Water areas are being accepted as desirable in recreation facility development.

6
The selection of land for recreation purposes should be based on its suitability for the intended use.

7
Parklands should be held inviolate in perpetuity, protected from any diversion to non-receation use. This can be ensured through the provisions of an official plan, adequately supplemented by zoning by-laws.

8
Since they may have to be adapted to meet future changes in interest or population growth, keep the location, size and design of an area or building as flexible as possible.

9
Leave the design and construction of individual facilities to qualified specialists.

10
When possible, locate facilities centrally within the area to be served. In all cases, place them where they can be reached easily and safely by the most people.

11
All publicly-owned buildings (e.g. schools), grounds and equipment should be made available for public recreation use—as long as this does not interfere with their primary purpose.

12
Include all privately-owned recreation areas and facilities into the total plan to avoid duplication of facilities and personnel. Exceptions would be when the private facility is restricted to one group of people or is inadequate because of size or quality.

13
Architectural style preferably should be consistent within one park area and compatible, within reason, throughout the municipality.

14
Design is related to appearance and utility, each of which should complement the other; construction is directly related to the cost of operation and maintenance.

15
The closer the relationship among the authorities or agencies doing the planning, the programming and the maintenance of facilities, the more effective and efficient is the recreation service provided by the municipality.

16
Consider the neighbors around any recreation facility. There are fewer problems when initial planning precedes housing development. If you indicate the major recreation facilities in the official plan, the residents or prospective residents adjacent to the proposed facility know of it before they buy or build.

17
Planning requires the cooperation of the citizens and should reflect their wishes. An informed citizenry is an essential part of the plan. People can be directly involved in planning through community conferences.

Planning a specific building

Before starting any building project, the following questions must be answered:

- Is the need for it justified and proven?
- Is the location suitable and accessible?
- Is this a duplication of some other facility?
- Is there enough money to operate and maintain it?
- Is the leadership staff available?
- Is there a recruitment and training program for volunteer leaders?
- Can the municipality afford it?
- Can it afford not to build it?

Know what you want and how much money is available before approaching the architect. Then select the architect, the park planner and the landscape architect on the basis of proven ability in designing and building recreation facilities.

Make the landscape an integral part of the architecture of the building and vice versa; design to blend with surroundings.

Check to see that all essential services are available: water, drainage, electricity, transportation and room for parking.

Place the emphasis where it is needed; e.g., spectator space versus play areas, acoustical treatment where sound is a factor, movable furnishings in conference rooms.

Rigidly follow official sizes and material specifications; be certain floor sizes are measured from the inside of the supporting or dividing wall.

Provide for future additions and extensions if continued growth is expected in the area served.

Pay special attention to: supervision and control points; lighting, ventilation and electrical outlets; grouping and accessibility of plumbing connections; flexibility of meeting rooms, change rooms and craft rooms; adequacy of floor space, seating capacity and coat hanging facilities for participants and spectators; suitability of facilities for age, sex and interests of people served; doorways and hall widths for traffic flow; mud scuffs or grills at all outside doors; adequate and accessible storage space; drainage—both outside (surface) and inside; communication aids.

Locate areas to be used by older people on the ground floor and place the entrance at the ground level or use ramps.

Combined facilities (e.g., gymnasium-auditorium) are seldom entirely efficient for either specific purpose.

What facilities are available ?

The municipal recreation committee should possess a complete inventory and appraisal of existing privately and publicly-owned facilities. The study to secure this information should include such factors as: the type of the facility, ownership, location, dimensions, shape, state of repair, rental costs, present use, availability for use, adequacy, other possible uses and the availability of parking.

Facilities needed in the future

When the recreation committee has surveyed and recorded all recreation facilities available and the space required by community groups for their present and proposed programs, you can determine the nature and location of additional facilities. Long-range planning of facilities becomes more difficult when industrial development or some major change in the community is anticipated. Future annexations or amalgamations of municipalities must be considered. Regional government is creating further change. In many cases the recreation authority is planning for communities not yet in existence, for families whose homes have not yet been built, for urban renewal areas in their planning stage and for services not yet in demand.

The recreation committee must work in close cooperation with the municipal planning board to keep the planners aware of present and future recreation facility needs. Establish a close liaison between the committee and the county or district board. The park-school concept is now used in several municipalities and seems to meet the combined park and school facility needs.

Many private agencies build or develop facilities for their own programs. The committee can encourage them to use suitable standards and to consider the community's needs in locating them. The same is equally true with conservation authorities, parks boards and community centre boards. Representatives of all these authorities and agencies should meet regularly to formulate both short and long-range plans for the future.

Cooperative action

It may be to the advantage of the municipality and the recreation committee to allow a private club to operate a facility located on publicly-owned land if:

- club membership is open to all and fees are within the reach of most residents.
- some prime time is always available for the general public.
- an agreement is drawn up permitting the municipality to terminate operation if there is reasonable dissatisfaction.
- the club will pay local taxes based on a building assessment.

Service clubs or community groups may be encouraged to build or develop recreation facilities on publicly-owned land if:

- the club or group has sufficient money, either cash or promissory notes, to complete the construction or its share (if it is a joint venture between the club and the municipality).
- the plans and specifications meet all provincial and municipal standards.
- it is clearly understood that the facility belongs to the municipality.
- the *entire* operation of the activities in the facility is supervised by the municipal authority.

The committee should have a schedule prepared showing the recreation facilities required for the next five, 10 or 20 years (with priorities established), indicating the general location of each facility. This information could form an appendix to the master plan of parks and recreation facilities. When service clubs request a project, suggestions that fall within the financial capacity and interest of the club can be offered from this inventory of need.

Standards for Park Areas

Municipal recreation committees are encouraged to use three classifications for parkland.

Neighborhood parks

These serve the people who live within a given neighborhood. They should meet the interests of that specific area and be within walking distance of all sections.

Community parks

These serve the people who live within a community. They should be accessible by public transportation and large enough to accommodate all types of recreation activities.

Regional parks

Large, often somewhat specialized areas that serve the people who live within a large region. A regional park may serve more than one municipality. The following minimal standards for parkland are recommended:

- neighborhood use—1 acre per 1,000 population.
- community use—2 acres per 1,000 population.
- regional and specialized use—7 acres per 1,000 population, i.e., a total of 10 acres of developed, accessible and usable parkland per 1,000 population.
- there should be an additional 10 acres per 1,000 population of land in its natural state or undeveloped, but usable or potentially usable by the public, i.e., a standard of 20 acres of publicly-owned parkland of all types per 1,000 population.

Consider the following points when setting this standard for a specific municipality:

- a degree of flexibility should be used. Because of affluence and changing recreation patterns, this standard which links size of area to the number of people who live in a community is open to question.
- balance of all types of areas within a region and a community.
- standards should be adequate to meet present and future needs, yet be reasonably attainable and acceptable.
- make separate allowances for parking space; it should not be included in an inventory of park area.

Additional standards for all types of publicly-owned recreation facilities will be found in the manual *Standards and Definitions of Terms.* Ask your consultant, Youth and Recreation for a copy.

Recreation facilities—

Some key questions:

1
Has your municipality considered whether or not it is advisable to consolidate park and recreation activities under one department?

2
Does your municipality have a system of parks designed and equipped to serve the people as places for the enjoyment of outdoor activities?

3
Has your municipality adequate and suitable structures where people can carry on indoor recreational activities?

4
In your municipality are there playfields for sports events with accommodation for spectators, and perhaps amphitheatres, swimming pools, beaches, picnic areas, camping grounds and nature trails?

5
Have studies been made in your municipality to determine the needs and interests of participants and potential participants in recreation programs?

6
Is there a neighborhood park or suitable school playground within walking distance (¼ to ½ mile) of every home in the community, primarily for children of elementary-school age?

7
Have the park, recreation and school authorities developed an integrated park-school plan to provide for joint planning of recreation areas and facilities? If so, how definite is the agreement?

8
Are all expenditures for land acquisition and major improvements made in accordance with a long-range plan that is an integral part of an overall municipal plan?

9
Are sub-division regulations and a master plan used when parks and recreation facilities are being located? Is the plan up-to-date?

10
Is cognizance taken of the relationship of dedicated land (5%) in new sub-divisions, one to another as well as to the total municipal plan of development?

11
In planning the placement of acquired properties, do you consider the segmentation of the municipality into neighborhoods by such barriers as roads, streams, railway lines, hills, and so on?

12
Are unsuitable areas being accepted by the local authority for parks and recreational purposes?

13
Have you recommended the replacing of recreation areas or structures that are inadequate, badly located, too costly, unsuitable in size, or lacking in development possibilities?

14
If your committee is responsible for the purchase and maintenance of equipment do you standardize machines and other equipment and keep service records?

RECREATION FACILITIES—A Composite Survey Form

Facility Outdoor_____ Indoor_____

1. Type_____ Size_____

Description _____ Dimensions_____
(a drawing may be attached)

2. Name_____

3. Location_____

4. Owned by_____

5. Maintained by_____

6. State of repair and general condition_____

_____

7. Administering agency_____

8. Operating or rental costs_____

_____

9. Present use_____

_____

10. Adequacy for present use_____

_____

11. Possible future use_____

_____

12. General comments_____

_____